

4. TB in Non-Bovine Farmed Animals

Summary

- TB in non-bovine farmed animals is rare and they do not appear to represent a significant reservoir of disease for other animals. The risks to human health and of spreading disease to cattle are low.
- We are working with the relevant industry sectors to help them to improve the way TB is dealt with in non-bovine farmed animals (camelids, deer, goats, pigs and sheep) and to empower farmers to manage TB risks in their own herds.
- We will improve TB surveillance, improving the identification of disease symptoms in carcasses inspected in abattoirs; helping private vets to identify TB at post mortem and publishing improved statistics to better inform farmers about their true risk.
- We will encourage better risk management, including a review of current arrangements for movement restrictions following a TB outbreak to see if these could be liberalised; encouraging the non-bovine sectors to investigate options for insurance; exploring the potential of vaccination and providing targeted information to those managing the highest risks.
- We will work in partnership with each of the sectors' representative bodies to help these industries become self regulating without unnecessary interference from Government, in line with our objectives on responsibility and cost sharing.

118. Evidence of TB detected during post-mortem examination or inspection is notifiable in all non-bovine farmed species: camelids (including alpacas and llamas), farmed deer, goats, pigs and sheep. Generally, these animals are considered to be spill-over hosts for TB and within England do not appear to constitute an ongoing reservoir of disease. They are not currently considered significant in determining the levels of TB in cattle or badgers in England. The risks to human health are also currently considered low. Most of these sectors contain large numbers of animals and yet the number in which here TB infection is detected post mortem is very low (see Table 4).

Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Pig	0	0	1	8	1	12	2	5	10	23	29
Camelids	0	0	0	3	1	1	9	20	22	68	43
Sheep	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	5	13
Goats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	33	0	1
Park Deer	2	0	2	0	2	1	17	4	2	0	6
Farmed Deer	1	0	8	8	0	1	5	1	1	1	1

Table 4: Incidents of confirmed *M. bovis* infection in non-bovine farmed animals in Great Britain since 2000.

119. A more consistent approach to TB policy for non-bovine farmed species is needed, one where eventually, and through building on partnership working, the various industry groups can become self regulating without unnecessary interference from Government. We want to give livestock owners more responsibility for tackling this disease, giving them a stronger stake in managing risks and empowering them to take action. We want owners to be able to decide for themselves, within a broad framework

set by Government and the industry, how to manage their disease risks in the best interest of their businesses.

120. Some sectors are already well advanced towards that end. For example, the pig industry is financially self supporting and through its industry bodies, and has been successfully raising awareness of the risks of TB by working with individual farmers on improved bio-security measures, particularly to protect outdoor reared animals against transmission risks from badgers. For other sectors, moving towards self-regulation will take time and will only be possible by working in partnership with Government. Our ultimate goal is to enable non-bovine livestock owners to stand on their own without the need for government support or compensation.

4.1 Surveillance and control measures in non-bovine farmed animals

121. Detection of TB in non-bovine species either takes place in abattoirs as part of routine meat inspection or during post mortem examinations carried out by private veterinarians. For farmed deer, pigs and sheep, slaughterhouse surveillance is the primary detection method and for pigs and deer this is largely concentrated in a small number of specialist abattoirs. To further improve our ability to identify TB in slaughterhouses, Defra has worked closely with the FSA to provide enhanced TB awareness training to inspectors in all red meat abattoirs. The concentration of slaughterings in a limited number of premises for deer and pigs will assist this process.

122. In camelids (alpacas and llamas) and goats disease surveillance mainly relies on private or laboratory veterinarians detecting the presence of infection during post mortem examinations. To continue to raise their awareness of TB in non-bovines and to help ensure disease is identified during post mortem examinations, Defra plans in 2011 to provide specialist veterinary practitioners with additional information on TB and the typical post mortem characteristics in non-bovine species.

Movement restrictions

123. When disease is first identified in a herd or flock, following detection at post mortem surveillance, movement restrictions are imposed to contain any further disease spread. These restrictions last until the herd or flock tests negative (following the voluntary slaughter of any test positive animals) or until the cohort of exposed and potentially infected animals have been removed as part of normal production. In flocks and herds where animals are being reared for their meat, movement restrictions may not be a particular problem as this group will move direct to slaughter as part of normal business. However, the voluntary slaughter of test positive animals in breeding and rare breed herds or flocks can lead to significant financial losses and a loss of genetic diversity.

124. We plan to review the current policy of the automatic application of movement restrictions to consider whether these are always appropriate, necessary and justified by the risk. This work will take place during 2011 and discussions will be held with the industry sectors.

Testing

125. Unlike for cattle, there are no regular testing requirements for non-bovine species. When testing is used, for example to lift movement restrictions the tuberculin skin test is the standard internationally accepted TB test. While the skin test is effective when used in most non-bovine species, our experience of its use in camelids suggests that it is not sufficiently sensitive in these species. This has led to the voluntary deployment of two supplementary blood tests. These are currently undergoing validation at the VLA in a project funded by the

main camelid societies. The full validation of blood tests for use in camelids is expected by the end of 2011.

126. Currently, TB testing of goats and sheep is only carried out when TB is suspected to be present in the herd or flock following post mortem examination or when linked epidemiologically to a breakdown in cattle. The FSA and Defra are currently working together to develop a proportionate TB control plan to implement the EU hygiene regulations in goat or sheep milk producing units. The FSA is aiming to develop proposals for consultation in 2011. The main focus of the consultation will be on goats but may also seek views on arrangements for other animals. The control plan is likely to require herds to be subject to additional tests for TB and may therefore impact on the present TB testing arrangements.

127. At the moment the Government pays for most, but not all, TB testing of non-bovine animals. Over the longer term this may need to be revisited as part of the move to greater responsibility and cost sharing on animal disease control.

Other Measures

128. We will be improving the current statistics collected for each non-bovine species to provide monthly statistics for the numbers of herds or flocks infected; number of animals' skin or blood tested; number of TB test reactors and cases removed.

129. We will continue to work with sector representatives to provide advice and support on TB to livestock owners and the veterinary profession, helping to ensure information reflects the latest veterinary understanding and disseminating advice, including hard-to-reach groups such as non-commercial keepers. For example, support work to raise awareness about biosecurity including among small, specialist producers, about the risks from showing animals and other potentially risky management practices.

130. We plan to facilitate discussion between the various non-bovine sectors and the insurance industry to see whether there is a greater role for insurance in covering the risk of significant losses, in particular from TB in high value breeding herds.

131. We will continue to discuss with the various industry sectors what role vaccination may play in reducing TB risks in their species. Discussions are at an early stage between the camelid societies, Defra and AHVLA over the possibility of vaccinating camelids and the use of a DIVA test to differentiate vaccinated from infected animals.

4.2 Compensation and ex-gratia payments for non-bovine farmed animals

132. For goats, pigs and sheep there is no statutory compensation scheme or ex-gratia payment for the voluntary removal of TB affected or test positive animals. These costs are borne by owners and that is Defra's longer term aim for all non-bovine sectors including deer and camelids. Currently there is a statutory compensation scheme for deer under which keepers receive £600 or 50% of the market value (whichever is less) for any compulsorily slaughtered test positive animal. The call on these funds in recent years has been negligible due to the low level of skin testing of farmed deer that takes place and Defra will discuss phasing it out with the industry during 2011.

133. Currently camelid owners who sign a voluntary agreement to allow testing receive an ex-gratia payment of £750 for each test positive animal voluntarily removed. This arrangement does not satisfy the needs of the industry where high value animals are involved, nor is it sustainable for Government to continue providing even the present level of funding indefinitely. The current arrangements therefore need to be revisited and, together with the camelid industry, we need to develop a solution consistent with a longer term move

toward self-regulation. The expected validation of blood tests later this year, which should mean a greater degree of confidence in testing procedures, provides an opportunity to begin that dialogue.

4.3 TB in pets and wildlife

134. All mammals are susceptible to TB including pets and wildlife. Pets (e.g. cats) can be spillover hosts for TB as a result of contact with other infected species and their owners are encouraged to be aware of the risks and for example in cases of sudden weight loss or a persistent cough to take the animal to their local veterinarian for a check-up.

135. Wild animals may similarly become infected as a result of contact with other infected species. However, apart from badgers, no other wild animal in England is thought to be a significant and widespread maintenance host for disease. In the case of wild deer there is evidence of a particular risk of TB spread where some species are present in high densities and/or routinely fed. However, wider population control through culling by experienced stalkers should be effective in controlling disease.

The complete document can be accessed via the Defra website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13601-bovinetb-eradication-programme-110719.pdf>